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[EXTERNAL] Arctic Refuge Comments

1 message

Caroline Van Hemert <caro_van@yahoo.com>
Reply-To: Caroline Van Hemert <caro_van@yahoo.com>
To: blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov

Sat, Jun 16, 2018 at 9:42 PM

Dear BLM representatives,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I am concerned about the fragility of the environment, the value of recreational and scenic opportunities for the public, and subsistence needs of the Gwich'in people. The Arctic Refuge is one of the most iconic landscapes in our country, and provides important wilderness areas for both humans and wildlife to enjoy. There has not been adequate research conducted in recent years to assess the effects of oil development, including water use associated with building of ice roads, on fish, birds, and other wildlife. Existing information is dated and incomplete and cannot appropriately be used to evaluate impacts to habitats of the Arctic Coastal Plain in the 1002 area. Specifically, denning polar bears, caribou, migratory birds, and endemic fish populations may be affected by oil development. The Fish and Wildlife Service in 2015, after an extensive analysis, recommended wilderness protection for the coastal plain to Congress.

Additionally, infrastructure required to respond to an oil spill or other environmental damage related to development in this sensitive area does not currently exist. As the BLM is well aware, there are significant challenges in Arctic environments with regard to clean-up and spill response.

The rushed nature of the proposed lease sale, as well as inadequate public debate on the tax law and major knowledge gaps on potential impacts of oil development suggest that such decisions have been conducted in a hasty and ill-informed manner. I request, at a minimum, that the public comment period be extended 60 days. The Environmental Impact Statement must use sound, current, and impartial science. Much of this information is not currently available, suggesting that much more information gathering is needed prior to making any decisions about lease sales.

Please respect our valuable national treasure and conduct thorough and appropriate assessments. The general public, the Gwich'in communities, and the plants and animals that are present on the refuge deserve this respect.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,
Caroline Van Hemert, PhD
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